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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Items 80 and 86 of the preliminary list*
CONVENTION ON PROHIBITIONS OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS WHICH MAY BE DEEMED TO BE EXCESSIVELY INJURIOUS OR TO HAVE INDISCRIMINATE EFFECTS
EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 25 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 25 March 1999 from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq. The Minister calls attention to new admissions by the United States Department of Defense that United States and British forces used depleted uranium weapons in their aggression against Iraq in 1991 and to the catastrophic impact of the use of such weapons on man and the environment in Iraq.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 80 and 86 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Saeed H. HASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/54/50.

Annex

Letter dated 25 March 1999 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

I should like to call your attention to the new acknowledgement made by the United States Department of Defense concerning the use by United States and British forces of depleted uranium weapons in their 1991 aggression against Iraq in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the treaties and conventions outlawing excessively injurious and indiscriminate weapons, as published by the newspaper [The] Alb[u]q[uerque] Tribune in an article on 24 November 1998 (see enclosure I). This admission can be added to the successive acknowledgements made by the United States Administration and the British Government of which we informed you by our letters addressed to you and to the President of the Security Council on 25 June 1998 and 19 October 1998.

The article states that veterans of the 1991 "Operation Desert Storm" have accused the United States Department of Defense of covering up information that shows that hundreds of thousands of United States front-line troops were exposed to radioactive depleted uranium during the 1991 conflict. A map released by the Department of Defense (see enclosure II) shows vast troop movements through areas in Iraq and Kuwait where high concentrations of armour-piercing depleted uranium shells were detonated. The article states that United States and British forces fired more than 1 million depleted uranium rounds, weighing 315 tons, and that this was the first time that the toxic metal, a waste product left when natural uranium is refined to make weapons or fuel, was used in war.

Veterans' advocates and the Pentagon have been at odds for five years over whether any United States troops were contaminated. After years of denying any contamination, the Pentagon recently concluded that 400,000 Americans came in contact with depleted uranium. Gulf War veterans say they want to know how long the Pentagon was aware of the level of depleted uranium exposure to which troops were subjected.

"This is the strongest evidence yet that hundreds of thousands were exposed to radioactive toxic waste and that the Pentagon just sat on it, leaving sick Gulf War veterans twisting in the radioactive wind", said Paul Sullivan, director of the National Gulf War Resource Center.

Commenting on the map released by the Department of Defense, Pentagon spokesman Colonel Dian Lawhon said that the map existed but that she did not know how long it had been in existence and referred questions about it to Steven King, the Defense Department analyst who had developed the schematic.

The results of the studies conducted by teams of Iraqi medical specialist and by international groups such as International Educational Development, Inc. (whose findings are given in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/27) and the documents released by the Government of the United States of America and the British Government confirm that depleted uranium has been the cause of deaths, of serious illnesses and of birth defects that appear long after the use of weapons containing this lethal substance. It also lingers in the soil, water and air

for generations, making them unfit for human use. This shows the indifference and lack of concern of these two countries for the fate of the persons exposed to the hazards caused by the use of these lethal weapons of indiscriminate effect, whether civilians or soldiers and whether their own nationals or nationals of another State. These are the same countries that proclaim the slogans of human rights and accuse one State or another of violating human rights while they themselves are deliberately killing hundreds of thousands of people by the experimental use of weapons of mass destruction without regard for their short- and long-term catastrophic consequences for civilians.

The Government of Iraq reaffirms its previously announced position in this regard, namely that it holds these two States responsible in legal, humanitarian and moral terms for the health-related and environmental consequences for man and the environment in Iraq. It once again affirms its legal right to seek just compensation for the grave damage done to human beings, installations and the environment in Iraq by this internationally prohibited weapon.

We request you to have this letter and its enclosures circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Iraq

Enclosure I

GULF TROOPS EXPOSED TO URANIUM, MAP SHOWS

...

Veterans of the Persian Gulf War have accused the Pentagon of covering up information that shows that hundreds of thousands of U.S. front-line troops were exposed to radioactive depleted uranium during the 1991 conflict.

A map released by the Department of Defense late last week shows ... troop movements through areas in Iraq and Kuwait where high concentrations of armour-piercing depleted uranium shells were detonated. U.S. and British forces fired more than 1 million depleted uranium rounds, weighing 315 tons, during Operation Desert Storm. It was the first time that the toxic metal, a waste product left when natural uranium is refined to make weapons or fuel, was used in warfare.

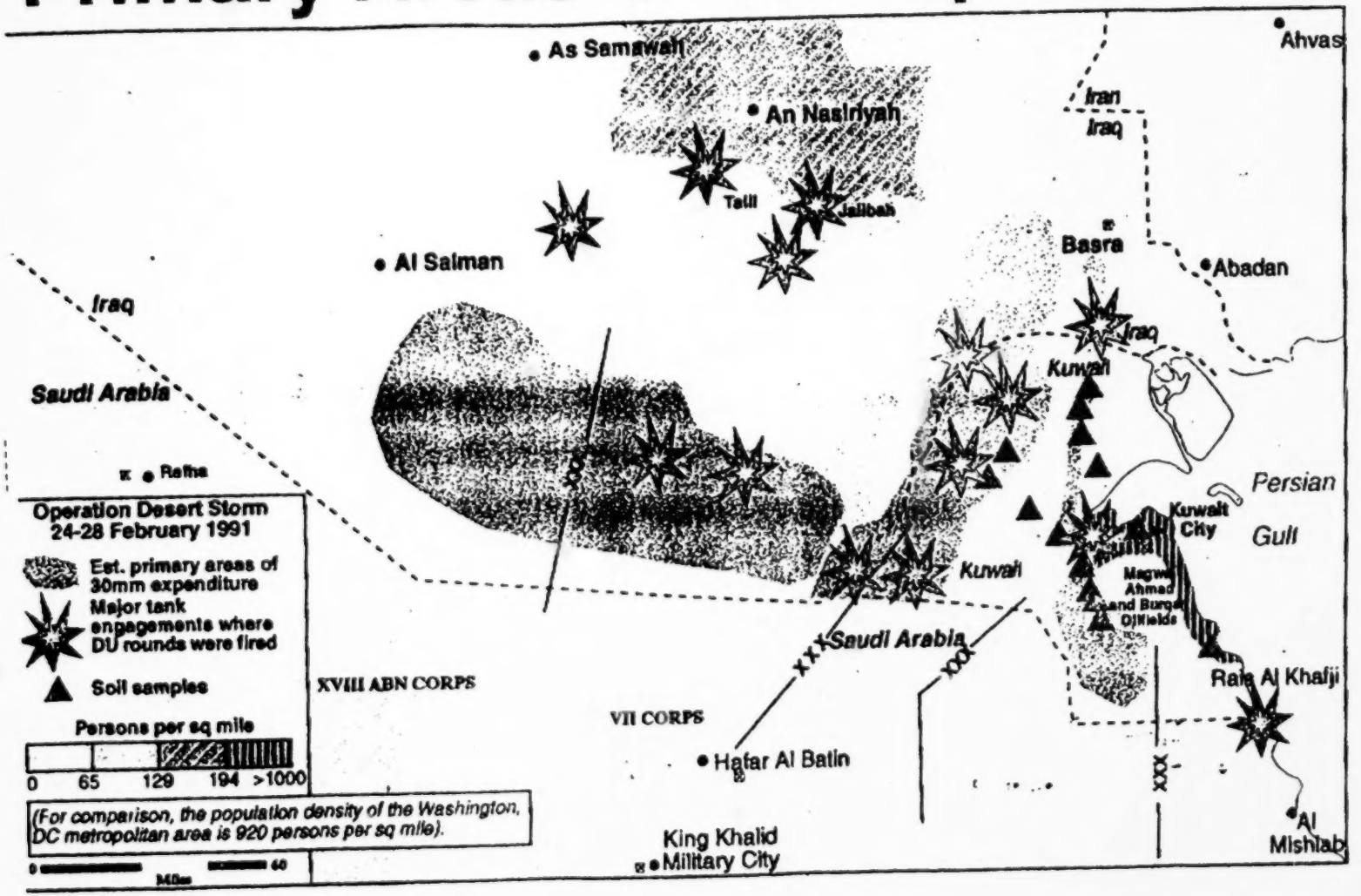
Veterans' advocates and the Pentagon have been at odds for five years over whether any U.S. troops were contaminated and subsequently became sick. After years of denying any contamination, the Pentagon recently concluded that 400,000 Americans came in contact with depleted uranium. But the Defense Department still insists the exposure caused no known health problems.

Gulf War veterans say they want to know how long the Pentagon was aware of the level of depleted uranium exposure to which troops were subjected.

"This is the strongest evidence yet that hundreds of thousands were exposed to radioactive toxic waste and the Pentagon just sat on it, leaving sick Gulf War veterans twisting in the radioactive wind" said Paul Sullivan, director of the National Gulf War Resource Center, which represents 54 veterans' groups.

Pentagon spokeswoman Lt. Col. Dian Lawhon said she did not know how long the map has been in existence and referred questions about it to Steven King, the Defense Department analyst who developed the schematic. King did not return a message Monday left on his office answering machine and Lawhon said she could not reach him either.

Primary Areas of DU Expenditure



Enclosure II